



**NORTH DAKOTA**  
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:  
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### **State Health Department Survey Indicates More Children Are Riding Buckled Up**

BISMARCK, N.D. – More North Dakota children are riding buckled up, according to a recent survey conducted by the North Dakota Department of Health.

Surveys are conducted every two years to measure restraint use by children younger than 11. The 2006 survey was conducted between May and August in 10 North Dakota cities. Surveyors observed vehicles and recorded data on 1,937 child passengers determined to be younger than 11. Of those, 87 percent were riding in a car seat, booster seat or seat belt, up from 83 percent in 2004.

Other highlights of the 2006 survey include:

- 98 percent of infants younger than 1 were riding in a car seat, compared to 97 percent in 2004.
- 91 percent of toddlers (ages 1 through 5) were riding in a car seat, booster seat or seat belt, up from 85 percent in 2004.
- 82 percent of children ages 6 through 10 were riding in a booster seat or seat belt, compared to 78 percent in 2004.

“It’s good to see more of our children protected when riding in vehicles,” said Dawn Mayer, director of the Child Passenger Safety Program for the North Dakota Department of Health. “One reason for the increase in restraint use may be the changes to the child passenger safety law that went into effect August 1, 2005.”

According to the survey, older children were less likely to be restrained than younger ones. The Department of Health strongly encourages parents to make sure their children are sitting in the

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back seat and buckling up. Even though the back seat is the safest location to ride in a vehicle, the recent survey shows that 20 percent of children continue to ride in the front seat.

The North Dakota Department of Health offers the following guidelines to help parents select the right child restraint for their child's age and weight:

- Babies should ride rear-facing as long as possible up to the height or weight limit of the particular seat. At a minimum, babies should ride rear-facing until they are at least age 1 and weigh at least 20 pounds.
- Children who weigh more than 20 pounds and are at least 1 year of age should ride in a forward-facing car seat with harness until they weigh 40 pounds.
- Children who weigh between 40 and 80 pounds and are less than 4 feet, 9 inches tall should use a booster seat. Both lap and shoulder belts must be used with a booster seat.
- Children who weigh more than 80 pounds and are more than 4 feet, 9 inches tall usually can fit into a lap and shoulder seat belt.

Other safety tips recommended by the department:

- Car seats should be used correctly, according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Refer to the vehicle owner's manual when installing car seats.
- Children ages 13 and younger should ride in the back seat – even if there is not an airbag in the vehicle.
- Children should not be transported in the cargo area of pickup trucks, vans or station wagons.

Each February, North Dakota observes Child Passenger Safety Month. Public health agencies, law enforcement officers, Safe Kids coalitions and Safe Communities programs across the state will be reminding children and parents about the importance of using safety restraints. Representatives will be visiting schools, day cares and other locations to share their safety messages using "Buckle Up" materials developed by the North Dakota Department of Health and the North Dakota Department of Transportation.

Free community car seat safety checkups also will be held statewide during Child Passenger Safety Month. During the checkups, the public can receive assistance installing car seats.

For more information about child passenger safety or for a schedule of community car seat safety checkups, contact Dawn Mayer, North Dakota Department of Health, at 800.472.2286 (press 1).

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